

St. Dominic's Church

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St. Dominic's Roman Catholic Church in Breese, Illinois, is known for its outstanding architectural beauty and its spiritual strength. In the early 1800s, many German Catholic immigrants wanting to begin a new life, moved to the unpopulated area near present-day Breese in southern Illinois. As Breese became a stable working town, the Catholic settlers began realizing that they needed a place of worship.

By 1855, forty Catholic immigrants made decided to build their own Catholic church in Breese. Two years later, the building of the church was underway when Sanger Kamp and Company of Chicago donated one half of a block for the erection of the building on the condition that the construction be started immediately. Anton Schmidt and Anton Albers were awarded the architectural contract for the forty-by-sixty foot Roman style church. Mr. Schlueter of Germantown was put in charge of the detailed stonework, while Theodore Klutho Sr., Fred Schulte, and a Mr. Dillmann were the carpenters assigned to the time-consuming task of building the church from the ground up. With these talented men in charge, the Catholics in Breese knew that their church was in good hands. The church was completed in early October 1858 and was dedicated to and named after St. Dominic.

As years passed and membership increased, it was obvious that a larger church was needed. In 1864, a meeting was held to consider building a larger parish immediately. The new parish was designed by Otto Koenig of St Louis, Missouri. It was first thought that bricks would be used for the exterior. However, learning that bricks were expensive and scarce, it was then decided to use limestone from the nearby Shoal Creek. The stone was not only used for the

foundation of the church, but the limestone was also burnt into lime for mortar by Clemens Niebur, a local resident. After realizing the cost of moving the stone would be very expensive, the parishioners hauled the limestone from the farm of Robert Donne to land donated by Frank Marks to be used for the site of the new church. The Gothic stone church was constructed with three towers built upon the large shingled roof. It had two side towers and one center tower 180 feet tall. Finally, in December 1869, after five years of hard work and dedication the \$65,000 church was completed, and is still standing to this day, celebrating weekday as well as Sunday masses

As we look at the church today, we see selflessness, cooperation, devotion, and fortitude of the past parishioners of St. Dominic's parish. The church would never have been built as beautifully as it was without the time, generosity, and dedication of the workers and the congregation. [From *The Breese Journal*, Oct. 18, 1982; St. Dominic parishioners, *Saint Dominic Catholic Church*; Anon., *A History of St. Dominic's Church, Breese, Illinois*.]